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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SOFIA 000103

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EB/IPE JURBAN; SWILSON
DEPT PLEASE PASS USTR LERRION
DOC FOR SSAVICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [KIPR](#) [ASEC](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: BULGARIAN POLICE BUST COUNTERFEIT CD RING

Ref.: Sofia 85

¶1. SUMMARY: Bulgarian Police busted a syndicate believed responsible for illegal production, storage and retail distribution of pirate optical disc media (ODM). During a two-day operation (January 20-21, 2006), police simultaneously raided an illegal production site, warehouse premises and retail distributors. The Ministry of Interior reported the arrest of the ringleader of the operation, seizure of 13,000 pirate discs in Sofia, and initiation of five investigations. The total number of seized discs will likely increase as police compile the results of the coordinated effort. End Summary.

¶2. The Economic Police Unit of the Bulgarian Police Service raided on January 20, 2006, a residence in Sofia believed to be the center of an illegal ODM operation. They seized 8,329 pirate discs, 7,000 printed covers (inlay cards), and large quantities of blank discs and reproduction equipment. The 27-year old behind the pirate operation was detained and charged under Article 172-a of the Penal Code. However, he was later released on bail of 2,000 leva (about USD 1,250).

¶3. As part of the enforcement action, police raided another 14 premises, warehouse facilities, and retail outlets in Sofia and four other cities: Vidin, Ruse, Plovdiv and Burgas. When police raided a location near a notorious ODM pirate spot in Sofia -- Slaveykov square -- more than 2,000 discs were seized. Another 1,500 pirate discs were seized nearby from a vendor on a major commercial street.

¶4. The local representative of the Motion Picture Association, Rozalina Apostolov, informed us that her organization supported the recent enforcement action. Apostolova confirmed to us the success of the operation commanding the authorities for their resolve in cracking down on the pirate disc street trade. Tax inspectors also took part in the enforcement action, detecting a number of tax violations, according to Apostolova.

Comment

¶5. The raid came only days after the new Council for Intellectual Property Protection (CIPP) was formed and held its first meeting (reftel). It marks stepped-up enforcement efforts by the Bulgarian authorities to stem the overwhelming pirate disc trade in the country. Combined with the CIPP formation, the recent raid demonstrates the power of effective partnership between government agencies and private industry. It is essential, however, that Bulgarian authorities sustain enforcement operations, and eventually arrest and prosecute intellectual property infringers. End Comment.

BEYRLE